DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 285 274 EA 019 622

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TITLE Clinton County School District "Learning Management System" Dropout Prevention Program.
INSTITUTION Clinton County School District, Albany, KY.
PUB DATE Jun 86
NOTE 6p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Creative Teaching; *Dropout Prevention; Elementary Secondary Education; *Low Income Counties; Parent Participation; *Participative Decision Making; *Potential Dropouts; Poverty Areas; *Remedial Programs; School Community Relationship; *Student Needs
IDENTIFIERS *Clinton County School District KY

ABSTRACT

To provide potential dropouts with increased opportunities for academic and social success and ensure school and community involvement, the Clinton County School District (Kentucky) has developed a comprehensive dropout prevention program emphasizing the assessment of student needs. This paper describes the program's purpose, target groups, community background, operational plan, evaluation process, and support system. The program will prioritize and correlate suggested remediations, training, and therapy used with students and report students' progress to parents through an indepth Learning-Management System and readable computer printouts. The program will include all students, handicapped, and other individuals and groups traditionally underrepresented in earlier programs. The target population is a county with nearly 40 percent of its population living in poverty. A primary aim is for teachers and administrators to deal with adolescents "where they are" and motivate them toward active and responsible learning. To implement the plan, the district will purchase a microcomputer software system and engage community groups and the schools in providing funding, gift certificates, treats, and prizes. The program will be evaluated according to the numbers of students served and measured against state standards for effective schools. The program will not succeed without devising alternatives to existing school regulations and obtaining teacher participation in the planning process and community support. (MLH)

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CLINTON COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT

"LEARNING MANAGEMENT SYSTEM"

DROPOUT PREVENTION PROGRAM

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The Clinton County School District believes that the assessment of students strengths or needs can be instrumental in the prevention of dropouts. The Clinton County School District believes that schools, teachers, administrators, parents, the community, and students should be considered in any dropout intervention program.

Potential dropouts must be provided numerous opportunities for both academic and social success. To facilitate instructional planning and management in the classroom, the district will provide an on-going progress reporting program, an intra-class tracking system, to identify the progress of individual students in the accomplishment of remediation and training for the student's need (problem) areas. The program will prioritize and correlate suggested remediations, training and therapy that can be used by classroom teachers in working with the student in need (problem) areas. The remediation plan can be in the form of an I.E.P. or an I.L.P. The impact of this program will be extensive. The program will require administrators and teachers to apply their talents creatively in order to help students learn and grow. After this program has been enacted, Clinton Schools will have some of the flexibility necessary for a successful program. Local creativity and innovation will be sparked into helping the Clinton County School District place an emphasis on learning, not on putting in one's time. The programs will stress the importance of the high school diploma and the need for self respect on the part of students. The overall dropout prevention program as outlined by the objectives will provide positive incentives for performance in Clinton County Schools.

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Purpose:
To increase the involvement of parents in improving the quality of elementary and secondary education and aid in dropout prevention, the Clinton County School District will implement a Learning-Management System, an indepth system to help educators assist individual students to reach specific learning capabilities. The educational results, whether in the regular, gifted, or special education areas, will be made available to parents in the form of easy to understand computer printouts. For parents and/or guardians this will be a total system with adherence to individual student attention. The system will make a specific, indepth identification of strengths/needs. Measurable activities for at-home support, awareness of the teacher's prioritized short-range objectives, and mechanisms for more-positive partnerships with the school and with specialists will be the main focus of this Learning-Management System.

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Target Group(Students):
Clinton County recommends the application of the Learning Management System as an intervention program for the following populations:

1. All kindergarten students.
2. Special Education students (including disabled, mentally handicapped, economically deprived, physically and sensory handicapped, etc.).
3. All students with low scores in the California test of basic skills and the Kentucky essential skills test.
4. All students with learning problems referred by classroom teachers.
5. The students exiting from Special Education and being placed in regular education (only those students with special learning problems).
6. Those students identified as potential dropouts for other identifiable reasons.

Target Population (community):
According to an article appearing Friday, September 13, 1985 in the newspaper USA TODAY, Clinton County is one of the fourteen Kentucky counties with a third or more residents living in poverty. 39.4% of the county's population live in poverty, ranking fourth in the state in the target group.

Clinton County is part of the Appalachian region. Comparing the education of the children of the Appalachian region to that of other areas of the country is often like comparing the income of a poor person to the income of a rich one. In statistics measuring basic skills, years of schooling, and money spent on education, the states that make up the Appalachian mountains consistently fall near the bottom.

It is striking that only a small percentage of revenue to support schools in Appalachian counties comes from property taxes at the local level. Nationally, some 68% of local funding for schools came from the property tax in the late 1970's. (1977 Census of School Finances).

The level of poverty and the level of educational aspirations tend to correlate positively with one another. Getting a community behind its school system is one of the best ways to elevate the community expectations concerning education. The Clinton County Dropout Prevention Program could be an invaluable tool in improving the quality of rural schools not only in the Appalachian region, but in the nation.

Rationale for objectives:
Schools have a publically recognized responsibility for preparing students for life after school. Objective number one will help the Clinton County High School teachers and administrators deal with adolescents "where they are". Too often schools forget to consider individual students and tend to concentrate on groups or classes. The Clinton County implementation of a Learning-Management System will enable teachers and administrators to identify competencies required for successful mastery of the curriculum. The major improvement expected from this objective will be the implementation of a total educational system geared

toward individual student achievement, with all parts of the system being advantageous since the student is the beginning and the end goal. Computer printout explanations will help everyone involved understand the student's strengths and needs while more effectively supporting the educational objectives of the district. This effectiveness should enable the district to make reductions of 45% to 60% in special education expenditures from Child Find fund to placement procedures. The savings in the special education area alone could be utilized for other areas of instruction. Since each student is processed individually, with Individual Learning Programs based upon the results of 56 screening tests and up to 340 subtest, the teacher, administrator, and parent(s) will have at their disposal a detailed profile of each student listing how that student learns, and why the student learns that way. A Learning-Management System will emphasize the need to motivate students, to engage them actively in learning, to take advantage of youth's natural urge to take responsibility and to be treated with respect.

A 1932 written report on the health of Kentucky's economy indicated: a direct relationship between Kentucky's general economic status and her educational backwardness. Just as the direct relationships between poverty, nutrition and health, underemployment, unemployment and low education achievement were clear sixty years ago, they are clear today. We have been locked in vicious cycles of poverty and low aspirations for schools through several generations. It is "no mere coincidence" that a state now ranking fiftieth among the nation's states in the adults who are high school graduates also ranks high in the numbers of the children of these adults who drop out of high school, and ranks low in per capital income and in expenditures on education.

A second objective will be to implement an incentive plan to improve the attendance rate which has been below that of the state average for the past several years. In 1980 the percent of student attendance was 89.05. 1981 showed 89.33 percent of the students in attendance. 90.43 percent of the students were in attendance in 1982, but that figure dropped to 92.21 in 1983. In 1984, 92.79 was the percent of attendance. The incentive plan will be a joint venture of parents, teachers, administrators, and students. The community will provide money and/or gift certificates and prizes to students with perfect attendance during any 20 day period of time.

Plan of operation:
To meet the needs of objective one, the district will purchase a MICROCOMPUTER SOFTWARE SINGLE-LEVEL BASIC SYSTEM from INSIGHT UNLIMITED developed specifically for High School and Adult level learners. Computers already in place with the central office will store the components of the system and make the printouts available to parents and teachers alike. The local school system will provide the salary for the computer operator.

To meet the needs of objective two, community banks, factories, business concerns, individuals, and the local school system are teaming together to provide funding, gift certificates, treats, and prizes ranging from savings bonds to clothing to those students who maintain 100% attendance during any one month of school. As the level of student attendance rises during the coming years, it is the feeling of administrators, parents, and teachers that other needs will be served, particularly in the areas of dropouts, failure, and student attitude toward the educational system. Funding in this area will be easily followed as it goes through the school system. Data can be gathered easily, and results can be verified without question.

Evaluation:
Objective number one can be evaluated according to the number of students served by the program. The project proposes to serve a large target population in the school district during 1986. A questionaire will be filled out by students, teachers, parents/guardians, administrators, resource personnel, and specialists involved with the project. Data accumulated from the survey can be used to put together an overall picture of how well the computer program served the learning needs of each child.

Objective number two will be evaluated in comparison with the state average. The state has set a minimum acceptable level of performance to be an effective school at 96%. The incentive plan will be the major force in correcting this area which has traditionally been a weak point in the Clinton County School District's total educational program. Data from this incentive plan can be compiled on a monthly or yearly basis and could be of assistance to any other school system desiring an incentive plan to be utilized in raising the average daily attendance rate within their district.

Support:
The Clinton County School District is of the opinion that regular school attendance is a joint venture entered into by students, parents, faculty, and administrators. In an attempt to keep potential dropouts in attendance, the district will address the problem with an intervention program that will send a counselor into the home to work with the parent(s) to identfy the major causes for the student's being out of school. The program will be prevention oriented and will aid the student's re-entry process if the student has dropped out. Where the dropping out process is the result of a series of failures over a period of time, tutoring sessions not only in academic achievement areas but also in positive social recognition and belonging areas will be made available by the visiting counselor.

The counselor/tutor will make home visits (after school hours) following referral of a student by a principal, assistant principal, counselor, director of pupil personnel, or teacher. It is felt that this approach could have the effect of obtaining greater

parent interest as well. The counselor/tutor will keep a record of each referral, the mileage to and from the student's home, and the number of hours spent with the student and/or the parent(s). The counselor/tutor will spend approximately twenty hours recruiting, checking student records, and writing individual student programs.

Conclusion:
Dropouts can belong to any one of several identifiable groups. The objectives of this program will include all students, handicapped and other individuals and groups that have traditionally been underrepresented in earlier programs. Objectives one and two are designed to benefit each and every student within the system itself .

This program is not a modest undertaking. It will take a major investment of time and talent from teachers, students, parents, administrators, and the community to accomplish these objectives. The district will be required to come up with and implement acceptable alternatives to existing school regualtions including, but not limited to: a.) mandatory daily attendance, b.) required days of attendance during the school year, c.) applicable truancy regulations and d.) the inclusion of teachers in the planning process and community involvement/support if the program is to succeed. .